

Safety Report

Bar crossings aren't routine without a lifejacket

Narrative

Two gentlemen out on a fishing expedition around South Stradbroke Island on a perfect day were returning from offshore waters through the Jumpinpin Bar in a 5.9 meter bowrider runabout. The conditions appeared so calm that donning lifejackets was not even considered.

The Jumpinpin Bar, notorious for shifting sands and changing conditions, presented the fishermen with an errant wave which stood up and crashed into the starboard side. The boat was rolled and both men and a pet dog were thrown into the water.

Luckily some PWC enthusiasts came upon the two men and were able to get them safely to shore and subsequent medical attention. Unfortunately their canine friend was lost along with their boat.

Lessons

1. **Crossing coastal bars can be dangerous. Before attempting to cross a coastal bar you should:**
 - a. **contact your local marine rescue group and obtain an update on bar conditions including tide and weather information**
 - b. **preferably cross on an incoming tide**
 - c. **stand off for a period of time and assess the wave patterns to determine deeper areas.**
 - d. **ensure that all deck openings, hatches and doors are securely battened down or closed**
 - e. **ensure all loose gear is secured**
2. **When approaching a bar from the sea, increase power to maintain speed within the set of waves, position the boat on the back of a wave – do not surf down the face of the wave, adjust the boat's speed to match the speed of the waves but do not attempt to overtake the waves.**
3. **Legislation makes it a requirement for all persons in an open boat less than 4.8 meters in length to wear a lifejacket when crossing designated coastal bars. However wearing a lifejacket while crossing coastal bars is highly recommended in all boats.**
4. **The master of a boat has a responsibility to his passengers to ensure their safety when crossing a bar.**

Safety Reports are prepared by the Compliance Unit, Executive Services and Compliance Branch, Maritime Safety Queensland. Safety Reports are intended to draw the attention of the marine community to the lessons arising out of investigations into marine accidents. Consequently, the reports do not assign fault or blame nor do they determine liability.

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5. In the vicinity of coastal bars, even the flattest of conditions may surprise.
6. Remember a lifejacket is not a life saver unless you're wearing it.

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